DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 336 857 EA 023 338

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TITLE Leadership Imperatives for School Board Members in the Reform and Renewal of Public Schools.
PUB DATE Apr 91
NOTE 48p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the National School Boards Association (San Francisco, CA, April 13-16, 1991).
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (Opinion/Position Papers, Essays, etc.) (120)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Board of Education Role; *Boards of Education; Collective Bargaining; Cultural Pluralism; Educational Change; Elementary Secondary Education; *Leadership; *Policy Formation; Public Schools; School Restructuring; Student Evaluation

ABSTRACT

Three leadership imperatives for school board members in school reform are presented in this paper. The imperatives are linked to specific challenges confronting the public school system, which include collective bargaining, student testing, and cultural diversity. Each is discussed and related to a legislative school board action that determines policies and programs. Suggestions are made for increasing board responsibility for accountable personnel contracts, considering alternative forms of student assessment, and creating cultural pluralism without divisiveness. A conclusion is that the effective school board member is an interpreter and translator of social events into educational policy. Ten commandments for board members are listed. (67 references) (LMI)

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LEADERSHIP IMPERATIVES FOR SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS IN

THE REFORM AND RENEWAL OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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APRIL, 1991

EA 023 338

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LEADERSHIP IMPERATIVES FOR SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS IN THE REFORM AND RENEWAL OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Scope and Importance of Public Schools

The public schools are big business in America. The nation's approximately 15,000 local school districts serve more than 42 million students, employ about 4.5 million persons--of whom about 3 million are licensed professionals--and will spend a projected $190 billion in school year 1990-91 (Guthrie & Reed, 1986). More people come into contact with the public schools than with any other institution serving our society. About one out of every six Americans is enrolled in a public school, and nearly 90 percent of all students in the nation's elementary and secondary schools are enrolled in a public school.

Public education is perhaps the single most important enterprise undertaken by state and local governments. In 1954, the U.S. Supreme Court in Brown I stated: "In these days, it is doubtful that any child may reasonably be expected to succeed in life if he is denied the opportunity to an education." The needs of our highly technological and pluralistic democracy require masses of educated men and women--citizens educated well-beyond the level previous societies demanded only for the very few. Today, the level of entry into the occupational world is significantly shaped by the level that is attained in the educational world. More than half of the jobs created between 1984 and the year 2000 will require education beyond high school. As we approach the year 2000, the fastest growing occupations will require employees to

have a much higher math, language, and reasoning capability than do current occupations.

Theoretically, the public school in America is an institution in which society pools its funds in an effort to secure benefits for all. Most Americans, at least in the abstract, support the principle that public education should provide equal educational opportunity for all regardless of "genetic condition, condition of birth, race or color, or previous condition of servitude." But the push for quality in education inevitably creates a tension between people's demands for the best attainable education for their own children and the equal treatment of all children. Urie Bronfenbrenner (1967) reminded us several decades ago that the cost of quality and equality in education calculated in dollars and cents invariably turns out to be higher than expected. He observed that the public is frequently unwilling to pay the price, and when it does, it is with reluctance, pain, and resentment toward both those who impose the payment and those who receive the benefits (Bronfenbenner, 1967). Public education, like all other institutional services extended to large segments of the nation's population, is expensive. Education is costly, and the costs will increase in direct proportion to the number of students, the scope and complexity of the tasks, and the inflationary rate of the economy.

Status of the Public Schools

The public schools always have experienced periods of ebb and flow with regard to public interest and pressure. By any standards

of comparison, the decade of the 1980's was one of unusually severe and diverse criticism of the public schools. Numerous national reports in the 1980's depicted widespread dissatisfaction with the condition of public education and expressed concern not only about the future for youths in our society but also about a "rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a Nation and a people." Challenges by cycles of inflation, escalating costs, program reduction, personnel retrenchment, demand for accountability, and accusations of racial and economic discrimination, the prestige of public education in the world's most affluent democracy is at a dangerously low ebb. Fred Hechinger, of the New York Times, noted several years ago that not within recent memory have the public schools had so few friends and so many detractors. The American people are being told that America's system for public schools is deteriorating rapidly and extensive reforms are essential if our children are to obtain an education.

Historically, in economic and social crises, Americans have turned to the schools in recognition of an unacceptable reality that large numbers of American children are in limbo of the past and unprepared for the future. Many are dropping out--not just out of school but out of productive society. Americans are demanding an improved supply of young people with the knowledge, the spirit, the stamina, and the skills required to make the nation once again fully competitive--in industry, in commerce, in social justice and progress, and not least, in the ideas that safeguard a free society

(Task Force on Teaching, 1986).

The Committee for Economic Development (1985) observed that, when schools are successful, they become a national treasure, but that many of our schools are failing the nation's children and are leaving the economy vulnerable to better educated and more highly trained competitors. Repeatedly, the various reports on the schools have emphasized that too many students lack reading, writing, and mathematical skills, positive attitudes toward work, and appropriate behavior on the job. Schools have been criticized because many students have not learned how to learn, make decisions or set priorities.

The professional credibility of all members of the teaching profession is severely compromised by the unacceptable reality that the public schools across this nation annually graduate high percentages of students whose cumulative deficiencies in reading, writing, and computational skills classify them as functional illiterates. The Committee for Economic Development (1985) asserted that children who are "at risk" in our society often attend schools that are "at risk" of failing them. Hugh B. Price, Vice President for the Rockefeller Foundation, warns that public education has a decade at the outside to shore up its credibility and recapture public confidence (Price, 1990). Price notes that public schools have not changed as rapidly as the children they exist to serve and that the public schools, by and large, lack a market incentive for modernization.

Our public schools, more so than ever before, are the outward

and visible symbols against which the frustrations and despair of the community can be directed. Majority and minority Americans alike, who seek to build and maintain a place in the "American Dream," are no longer willing to accept family or economic circumstances are the fundamental reasons for their children underachieving in the schools. The public schools of this nation have been required to redefine the essential standards of excellence and to strive to make quality and equality of opportunity compatible with each other. The creation of more effective schools for all students will require fundamental changes in the ways schools evaluate, sort, label and process students (Pink, 1984). School boards and school administrators have been charged with failure to adopt methods and procedures for weeding out incompetent within the school system, with not finding suitable ways of programming learning experiences so that results can be related to methods employed, and with not finding equitable ways of rewarding those school personnel who excel in performance.

The Constitution in all states contain language to the effect that the legislature has the responsibility for maintaining a thorough and efficient system of public education for all young people within certain age limits (Guthrie & Reed, 1986). An essential tenet of our democratic society is that public institutions be controlled by the people, not by experts, nor by bureaucrats (Tyler, 1988). Hence, all of the states provide that lay boards--boards of education, school committees, boards of

regents, etc.--be established to govern the schools. Some authority with power must decide among the often conflicting needs of and demands from constituent groups within a local school district. Traditionally, state legislatures have empowered local school boards with the delegated authority to set educational goals and policies in the various local school districts. Thus, the formal governance arrangement for local school districts vest nearly all authority and power in local and state agencies that are either elected or accountable to elected officials.

Imperatives for Board Members

School boards cannot wait for other social or political forces to remedy the deficiencies of public schools. Fundamental changes in the ways schools evaluate, sort, label, and process students will not occur unless school boards are prepared to communicate their support for desired improvements in what they do as well as in what they say. School boards need to examine their school system's goals, priorities, programs, practices, and personnel and their own conduct with such an appraisal focused upon the extent to which schools are indeed preparing all students for "lives of usefulness and reputation". In the reform and renewal of public schools, board members must recognize that understanding the condition of a school system is not a synonym for solutions and that anything that counteracts progress toward improving the educational lot and the life chances of all students must inevitably become a factor in diluting the scope and impact of reform and renewal efforts.

There are numerous imperatives in the governance and administration of public schools that compel the attention and action of a school board in the quest for schools in which all students are guaranteed some measure of success and where all students are ably assisted in becoming increasingly autonomous, self-actualizing, and self-directing individuals capable of identifying and pursuing their own aims within a living societal order (Meussig, 1969). Three leadership imperatives for school board members are presented here as examples of actions by school boards which can pave the way for significant improvements in how schools prepare all students to function as thinking, feeling, and caring citizens who are capable of meeting the demanding responsibilities of democratic citizenship in a rapidly changing nation and world.

The imperatives are linked to specific challenges which confront public school systems. Each imperative is presented with capsule commentary and each imperative is directly tied to an action which comes under the legislative domain of the school board in determining the permissible policies and programs of a school system. There is certainly room for debate about the relative importance of each of the imperatives presented in terms of your individual circumstances as a board member in your own school system. But I rather doubt that any of the imperatives that I identify can be dismissed on the grounds that it is of little or no consequence to the general improvement of public schools in America.

Collective Bargaining

IMPERATIVE: The collective bargaining agreements with teachers need to be restructured so that fundamental questions of policy are returned to the board room and so that contracts with licensed professionals hold teachers, counselors, etc. appropriately accountable for competence in performance.

The intensified movement to affix greater accountability on educators for the academic performance of students is generated, in part, by the conviction among the lay public that collective bargaining for educators in the public schools is dangerous to the health of public education (Staub, 1981). A large segment of the public is affronted by what is perceived as arrogance from spokespersons for teachers' unions at a time when public schools are under wide-spread criticism for the declining academic performance of many students. Certainly, the problems of the public schools in America are too multi-dimensional to be blamed exclusively or primarily on collective bargaining for teachers. Nevertheless, no evidence has been presented, nor does such evidence exist that collective bargaining contributes to the quality of education in the public schools (K. Scott, 1982). Collective bargaining has produced more prerequisites and privileges for teachers than improved pedagogy and professionalism.

Myron Lieberman (1979), once a strong advocate of rights for teacher organizations equal to that possessed by unions in the

private sector, now states: "The proposition that collective bargaining is good for pupils has its origins in politics, not in education." Hugh Price (1990), vice president at the Rockefeller Foundation, notes that teachers argue persuasively for professional respect and higher salaries but fail to address the quid pro quo for students. The organized teaching profession has not yet revealed a willingness to put its self-interests secondary to such noble objectives as equal educational opportunity and quality education. Lieberman (1979) asserts that teacher interests sometime support and sometime conflict with the interests of students and that teachers' unions in representing teachers cannot be guided by the interests of students.

Notwithstanding the fact that collective bargaining is encumbered by statutory policies that unwittingly add greatly to its implementation cost and that school boards often fail to enact policies which would reduce costs without prejudice to the legitimate rights of all parties (Lieberman, 1982), collective bargaining for teachers can be faulted for at least the following three shortcomings:

1. It has produced excessive protection for incompetents (Lieberman, 1982).
2. It tends to limit managerial discretion and alters negatively the relations between principals and teachers (Mitchell, 1982).

3. It constitutes an improper sharing of public authority with private interests organizations (Cohen, 1978 & Lieberman, 1979).

David Cohen (1978), more than a decade ago, raised the concern that informal structures were replacing formal students in influencing policies and programs in public education and that power and authority in public education were accumulating in the hands of people who are neither elected nor accountable to anyone who is. Cohen further noted that while the statutes of government tell us that education is controlled by citizens through democratic legislative bodies at state and local levels, public education, in fact, is controlled in more and more respects by public and private agencies whose power, while manifested at all levels of government, is increasingly national in character. Cohen identified testing agencies, textbook publishers, and organizations of educational professionals as examples of non-elected and non-accountable groups which exercise a powerful influence over public education.

Collective bargaining has resulted in the transfer of critical decision-making responsibility from duly elected representatives of the people, the local boards of education, to vested interests groups, teachers' unions (K. Scott, 1982). Many school boards tend to give away too much and enter into what are often called "handcuff" contracts with teachers' unions (Lieberman, 1979). As the influence of teachers' unions upon the decision-making process increased, the influence of legitimate interests groups decreased.

Teachers' unions, like all other unions, exist to advance the interests of their membership. They strive to secure sufficient power to promote their beliefs or welfare. As the external forces for reform and renewal of public education expand their efforts to shape the performance expectations for teachers, teachers' unions increase their political activities aimed at stopping or minimizing those changes perceived as undesirable.

In large measure, school boards have themselves to blame for many of the excesses of collective bargaining. Through negotiated transfers of power to teachers' unions and through failures to use effectively the powers they possess, school boards have experienced a decline in public confidence in their capacity to oversee the governance of the public schools. School board members recognize the political clout of teachers' unions. Teachers' unions have been very active and very successful in backing candidates for a host of offices at local, state, and national levels (Kirk, 1982). Elected and non-elected school board members are subject to intimidation by the political clout of teachers' unions and often make decisions that they would not otherwise make. Lieberman (1979) contends that if teacher bargaining is not harmful to students, it is only because certain school boards have not agreed to most teacher proposals at the bargaining table.

It is not uncommon for school boards, when they find that they have little or no money to offer teachers, to approve contracts with teachers' unions that forego certain management rights. In

the evaluation of teachers, the procedures involved, and the criteria to be used, are among the management prerogatives often sacrificed on the altar of negotiations (Crisci, et. al., 1990). The ill-advised generosity of school boards in delineating the criteria and procedures by which teachers are to be evaluated is a barrier to school improvement. Teacher appraisal has a direct bearing on the overall effectiveness of a school and provides the vehicle whereby the appropriateness of classroom instruction can be examined in light of student outcomes (Brookover, et. al., 1982). Principals believe that school boards are overly protective of teachers. Some principals simply rate all instruction as satisfactory to avoid both the burden of providing teachers with prescriptive strategies and the confrontations and paperwork associated with grievances filed by teachers who cite violations of protective clauses in the contract negotiated for them by their union.

Principals resent what they perceive as a systematic erosion of fundamental managerial prerogatives by school boards through contractual agreements with teachers' unions. Teachers now exercise considerable input into decisions about teacher placement and transfer. In some school systems, principals believe that teachers have greater influence than they have on decisions about class size, curriculum, discipline and about who is employed and where, who evaluates and the duration and composition of the school day (McDonnel & Pascal, 1979). In reflecting upon how collective bargaining for teachers has resulted in the loss of many of their

former managerial prerogatives, principals might very well call the principal's role of one of "great expectations" with much of the authority "gone with the wind." The strained relationship between teachers and principals reached such a point of friction and frustration that the American Federation of School Administrators (AFSA) in 1987 charged the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) with intensive lobbying nationwide to promote the transfer of supervisory duties to teachers (Education USA, April 6, 1987). The AFSA sought assistance from Lane Kirkland, president of the AFL-CIO, to resolve its complaint. Both the AFSA and the AFT are affiliated with the AFL-CIO. The organized school administrators indicated that they simply want to keep administrators in the position of administration and teachers in the position of teaching. Linda Darling-Hammon (1987) notes that administrators and teachers have come to see themselves not as a part of the same profession.

School boards should use the current "teacher empowerment" movement as a splendid opportunity to promote the professionalization of teaching by insisting that teachers, as members of profession, advance not merely their own interests, but also the public interests. Groups that claim the rights, privileges, and status of a profession should prove themselves worthy through the establishment and maintenance of ethical policies which govern the activities of its members and through the capacity and willingness to regulate itself in accordance with guidelines for the ethical conduct of its members (AASA, 1966).

"Teacher empowerment" should be predicated on the premise that the empowerment of any profession comes in its greatest measure as a direct consequence of demonstrated high competence by those in the profession. While no profession can guarantee that the exceptional practitioner will be commonplace, a profession should not support mediocrity and incompetence within the profession and should strive to make high competence commonplace. Teaching is an applied or clinical science involving services to people; using the processes of diagnosis, prescription, and implementation; and characterized by the creative integration of professional knowledge and skills, personal style, and teaching art, (Howsam, et. al., 1976). Teachers are involved in decision-making in the service of their clients, and these decisions should be made in accordance with the most valid principles and theories available.

For far too many teachers, the subject of pedagogy is approached as if it were a subject foreign to members of the teaching profession rather than the critical conceptual and operational elements of teaching. Most teachers are competent and skilled in their teaching, but teachers tend to be more dedicated to their teaching than to the professionalization of their teaching. In general, teachers do not possess a common body of validated knowledge and skills which is transmitted in the process of professionalism, held in common with other teachers thereafter, and constantly increased through the career span of the teacher (Howsam, et. al., 1976). For many teachers, the teacher's work consists primarily of making some kind of educated guess about what

would be a beneficial activity for a student or a group of students and then doing whatever is necessary to see to it that students remain involved in that activity. Many teachers rely on personal experience and conventional wisdom exclusively and are wary of available professional expertise and wisdom.

The greater the professional skills of a teacher, the more competent that teacher is in making a judgment about instructional practices and materials. Professionally competent teachers are those who face problematic situations in their classroom--learning difficulties, conduct problems, or whatever, by gathering data, thinking through the circumstances, and arriving at a plan of action to solve the problem. However, no matter how skilled and intelligent the teacher may be, he or she, will from time to time make errors of either observation or judgment or both. But competent teachers adjust to the multiple demands of a complex instructional environment. The truly exceptional teachers will occasionally go beyond the known diagnoses and treatments and present new ideas and ways of doing things. In no profession can the practitioner possibly learn all that there is to be learned about being a successful practitioner during the initial period of training for entry into the profession. The maximum development of all teachers occurs during the period of practice rather than the period of preparation for practice. But not all teachers have a strong service motivation and a career-long commitment to competence. Teachers want improved status and higher salaries but do not want to police their own ranks to weed out those teachers

who do not deserve either of the two and who severely tarnish the reputation of the profession as a whole by their lack of professionalism. Teachers are correct in seeking security against inappropriate restrictions and interference and in pursuing protection from arbitrary and capricious management. But the "teacher empowerment" movement is seriously flawed if its proponents champion the notion that teachers must function as independent managers of their classrooms, free from rationale criteria and procedures for teacher appraisal. The professionalization of teaching and "teacher empowerment" both should require teachers to be accountable to someone for doing specific things accorded to specific plans and against certain timetables to accomplish tangible performance results (Lopez, 1970).

School boards are notoriously bad at holding administrators and teachers accountable and need to simplify and shorten procedures for disciplining personnel who are not competent (Price, 1984). Teachers and principals who desire the differential treatment usually accorded to professionals must "prove themselves and demonstrate their commitment to school improvement." The time has long since passed when educators can simply state that they want the same things for students that parents want. School boards that reward teachers for longevity and virtually ignore teacher performance, that approve criteria and procedures for teacher evaluation which give aid and comfort to the inept and the incompetent, that disregard the multi-dimensional role of the

teachers by not responding to the need for differentiated staffing, that fail to reward suitably those who excel in their achievements, that transfer fundamental governance and administrative, and prerogatives to teachers neither contribute to the professionalization of teaching nor to the improvement of the educational lot of students.

The professionalization of teaching and collective bargaining are not one and the same. Collective bargaining for teachers, as it has evolved, is incompatible with the professionalization of teaching and is a barrier to school reform. If collective bargaining for teachers cannot be restructured in a manner that returns fundamental governance prerogatives to the board room and that truly advances the professionalism of teachers, then school boards should petition their state legislatures to phase-out collective bargaining for teachers and administrators and allow the basic relationship of educators to the schools to be determined by the same political and policy-making processes that exist to consider, formulate, and modify public policies outside of the bargaining arena (Lieberman, 1979).

Testing

IMPERATIVE: <u>The use of standardized achievement and competency tests should be drastically curtailed with resources diverted to the development and use of more subtle, sensitive, educationally useful forms of assessment with the need for comparative data being met in ways that do not carry such massive human and individual costs.</u>

For years respected educators both within and outside the specialty of mental measurement have proclaimed the limitations and misuses of standardized achievement tests in the nation's public schools. But in spite of the criticism, the use of standardized, multiple choice tests, which focus on basic skills and minimum competency, has reached the point where virtually every student is now tested at least once a year, and many are tested even more often (Education USA, January 7, 1991). Standardized achievement tests are administered annually to about 40 million students, and each year elementary and secondary school students take 127 million standardized tests and 20 million school days are devoted to such testing (ETS, August, 1990).

George Madaus (1989) believes that the sanctions and rewards attached to the tests do more harm than the limitations of standardized achievement tests. He asserts that when such important things like graduation, promotion, teacher evaluation, district certification, financial support, and major aspects of accountability affecting teachers or administrators are tied to test scores, it corrupts the process that school boards are trying to improve.

Lorrie Sheppard (1989) declares that standardized testing is running amok because:

> Newspapers rank schools and districts by their test scores. Real Estate agents use test scores to identify the "best" schools as selling points for expensive housing.

> Superintendents can be fired for low scores, and teachers receive merit pay for high scores. Superintendents exhort principals and principals admonish teachers to raise their scores--rather than to increase learning.

The Minimum Competency Testing (MCT) movement leaped into public education in the late 1970's and the early 1980's. Standardized testing has expanded greatly since the 1960's when only one state had a student assessment program, compared to all 50 states today. It is the current dominance of MCT programs which intensifies the controversy that has historically surrounded the issues of relevancy and validity of tests constructed to measure cognitive development. Educators trained in the complex specialty of mental measurement do differ on what are appropriate uses and what are misuses of tests and test results. William Turnbull (1978), former president of Educational Testing Service, noted: "Testing has undoubtedly suffered more from the excessive expectations of its most devoted advocates than from attacks of its critics."

The key issues in the controversy over tests and testing in American education are the purposes of tests, the test content and what it measures, and the ways in which test results are presented, interpreted, and used (Diamond, 1977). Tests are among the most important evaluative and prognostic tools that educators have at their disposal. But standardized achievement tests of all kinds are so often routinely and mechanically used that many educators have stopped thinking abut their limitations and benefits. Standardized achievement tests have been accorded higher regard than their history warrants (Bond, 1986). Testing continues to be used as a

major means of identifying the weak from the strong and exerts an undue influence on the determination of curriculum, performance expectations, and the success or failure of students (Scott, 1975). Keating and Oakes (1988) assert that an insufficient understanding of intelligence and unfair distinctions based on the misuse of tests result in mislabeling, misclassifying, and miseducation of many students.

Tests are often used to select some students for enriched educational opportunities and to slate other students for low-level participation (Keating and Oakes, 1988). Standardized testing has become the nation's "cradle to the grave arbiter of social mobility and a dominant force in shaping education across the nation" (National Center, 1988). Tests are used to determine who gets the commendation and who gets the condemnation (London & London, 1989). Tests have served as the "gatekeepers" to the benefits of public education. But no readiness or achievement tests that currently exist are sufficiently accurate to serve the high stakes functions that they are being asked to perform (Meisels, 1989). In Saving the African American Child, the National Alliance of Black School Educators (NABSE, 1984) declared that virtually all tests fail to meet the rigorous standards of psychometric science and that standardized achievement tests, more often than not, have been the instruments of politics rather than science. Brookover (1985)

asserts that tests have been used to justify discriminating against the poor and minorities. McClung (1973) declared that the tests which are educationally the most detrimental are those that are geared to the sorting and labeling of students and that serve to stigmatize some students with different labels, and to narrow the social and occupational options open to students upon completion of school.

Cultural bias is one of the most frequent charges levied against standardized achievement tests. Cultural bias in testing exists when test content and resulting norms reflect the dominant culture and are insensitive to differences in experiences, language, and cognitive style, and the way in which these factors might interact with test direction and test content (Ebel, 1975). Some experts contend that the test bias criticism is a false issue (Turnbull, 1977). Some experts believe that the "bias" which accounts for poor test performance by some minorities is not in the test so much as in the culture (Ebel, 1975). Some experts assert that test content does sometimes reflect instances of bias--both cultural and sexual--and that test bias and cultural bias are not mutually exclusive (Diamond, 1977).

Paul Ramsey (1990), a senior development leader at ETS, posed the following questions: (1) When students fail, especially minority students, is the problem with the test or with the educational system that has not prepared them to pass the test? and (2) Is standardized assessment a part of a racist conspiracy or a gauge of an educational system that is failing to fulfill its

promise? Ramsey, who is Black, noted that he works for a company that everybody loves to hate and not always without reason. Ramsey rejects the notion that testing companies purposely create biased tests, but he asserts that if White students, as a group did as poorly on standardized tests as Black students, we would know more about the reasons why.

Standardized achievement tests lack diagnostic and prescriptive validity (Bond, 1986). Howe (1978) states that they "take the temperature of the patient but provide no hints about the disease or its diagnosis." Testing experts do challenge the veracity of test performance and the utility of test scores as an aid to instructional practice (Miller-Jones, 1989). Ability and achievement tests are administered at intervals that make it difficult for any useful diagnostic feedback to influence the teaching process for a particular set of students taking the test. Also, conceiving instruction in the format of multiple-choice items leads to endless drill and practice on decontextualized skills (Sheppard, 1989). Standardized achievement testing is not compatible with the idea that intelligence is complex, multi-dimensional, and changeable, and schools have not rethought outmoded conceptions of the role of schooling in developing human potential (Keating & Oakes, 1988).

Assessments are needed that provide educators with an understanding of how students make sense of instruction and that help students develop higher levels of understanding and intelligence. Most of today's standardized achievement tests focus

on low-level basic skills and minimum competencies and do not test what a growing number of educators now agree what students should know. The dimensions of the test domain should be expanded so that teaching to the test does not imply teaching only to a subset of learning goals (Sheppard, 1989). Tests need to be redesigned to more closely resemble real learning tasks; tasks which would require more complex and challenging mental processes from students (Brown, 1989). Students should be tested for capability and habits we believe are essential (Wiggins, 1989), and at the same time, the new assessments will have to satisfy the public's demand for better information to help them gauge how their schools are doing (AASA, 1989).

Current school reform is primarily about curriculum and learning goals and not about techniques of assessment. But it is the power of tests and assessments to influence educators' behavior that makes them potent tools for educational reform (Education USA, January 7, 1991). The standardized achievement tests widely in use today are fundamentally incompatible with the kind of educational practices that are needed to meet the current challenges to public education. Goodlad (1978) emphasizes that we can no longer be content with standardized achievement tests scores in a few subject areas as the sole indicators of quality education.

The criticisms of standardized achievement tests are beginning to serve as a catalyst for change. Gregory Anrig (Education USA, January 7, 1991), president of ETS, declares that educational testing will change more in the next ten years than it has in the

past fifty. Anrig asserts that instructional testing must guide the improvement of teaching and learning and that instructional testing must give teachers and students information that will help them in the classroom so that they can meet rising expectations for better academic achievement. In 1990, the board of trustees of ETS in its annual report to the public on matters of public concern addressed the matter of restructuring of testing in American education. The report, in part stated: (ETS, 1990)

> There is a need for new kinds of assessments that represent desired educational goals and contribute in constructive ways to the teaching and learning process. Many see the use of well-designed performance tasks in tests (along with, or instead of, multiple choice questions) as bringing us closer to these aims. We share that view.
>
> It is important, though, to recognize the extent to which performance measures differ from existing accountability tests. When used for instructional assessment, they must be closely tied to the specific curriculum being taught in the classroom. They require substantial student and teacher time to accomplish, and they require carefully trained assessors to evaluate the results. All of this represents a costly investment. To

> justify that investment, there must be clear evidence that such assessment significantly informs instruction and enhances academic achievement.

In response to public demand for information on how well schools are doing, standardized achievement and competency tests were developed and became the major means of informing the public about how schools are performing. But educators have for years stressed that accountability tests do not address some of the most important objectives of teaching and that the results of such have been used to create rankings or to support other superficial judgments about educational quality (ETS, 1990). Nevertheless, until acceptable alternatives to standardized achievement and competency tests are developed, the accountability mentality in testing will be with us (Brandt & Madaus, 1989). Educators in their efforts to reform testing should not forget that standardized testing evolved and proliferated because the public lost confidence in the high school diploma (Wiggins, 1989). But policymakers need to understand that better content in testing is not the only answer; they must understand the important distinction between classroom assessment and accountability testing (Sheppard, 1989). Policymakers must overcome the habit of using product-oriented assessment techniques to measure process-oriented education and need to promote the introduction of assessments which fit the goal of the school to prepare students for the complexities of the post-industrial era (Costa, 1989). Legislators, parents,

and board members need help in understanding that standardized test scores are inadequate indicators of the quality of schools, teachers, and students (Costa, 1989). School boards across the nation need to rally behind a new generation of assessment products that are instructionally useful--products in which testing and teaching complement and reinforce one another (Martinez & Lipson, 1989).

Pluralism Without Divisiveness

IMPERATIVE: School boards must examine the interrelationships that exist in school systems between majority and minority students to determine what institutional policies, practices, and traditions impede or negate social conditions that permit ethnic, religious, and racial groups to live side by side, willing to affirm each other's dignity, ready to benefit from each other's experience, and quick to acknowledge each other's contributions to the common welfare.

America has become a nation of increasingly diverse people, drawn from many racial, national, linguistic, and religious origins (Gagnon, 1987). In many respects, America is a nation of minorities with each minority attaching some emphasis on its race, its language, its culture, its national origin, or some combination of these (Howe, 1980). Diversity is not without its paradoxes. John J. Patrick (1980) notes: "Research studies have shown, again and again, that Americans support in the abstract, the ideals of majority rule and minority rights. However, most children, adolescents, and adults are unwilling to apply these ideals to

certain instances." While the American society is one in which upward social, economic, and educational mobility are highly related to the individual's social class, gender, and ethnic group, the belief in the power of individual initiative remains deeply embedded in the mindset of most Americans (Banks & Banks, 1989).

Because education is looked upon as the "engine of the future," the formal and informal educational processes and systems seek to conserve and preserve the dominant ideologies, customs, and institutions of the American society (Gollnick, Klassen & Yff, 1976). Public schools do far more than teach students how to read and write. Society through education attempts to pass on the standards and ideals which society believe are good and necessary for present and future generations. Education is a form of social policy; a means by which society distributes power and privilege.

The choices Americans make about how our schools are organized and about what is taught in them are essentially political decisions determined by complex interactions among policymakers (Rich, et. al., 1990). Dianne Ravitch (Summer, 1990) notes that questions of race, ethnicity, and religion have been a perennial source of conflict in American education and that given the diversity of the American society, it has been impossible to insulate the schools from pressures that result from differences and tensions among groups. A school's curriculum often becomes the focal point of debate and controversy. By what it elects to include in its curriculum a school system implies something about what is worth knowing and who is important.

Ideally, every public school should measure up to high standards of ethnic sensitivity and racial civility. Every public school system should be committed to engendering values and implementing policies that will enhance respect for individuals and their cultures with an acceptance of the premise that the nation's cultural, racial, ethnic diversity--America's pluralism--is one of the most valued, significant, and important characteristics of the American democracy (Presidents' Committee, 1988). But our public schools have considerable room for improvement in establishing an atmosphere, a climate that welcomes diversity and supports the belief that everyone at school has something to gain from the increased diversity of student bodies (London, 1990).

Culture consists of the behavioral patterns, symbols, institutions, values, and other human made components of society. While cultures are in many ways similar, a particular culture constitutes a unique whole (Banks, 1977). The historical tendency of American institutions, including the schools, to encourage a concept of a cultural "melting pot" in an attempt to fuse the culturally pluralistic and ethnically diverse immigrant populations has presented more problems than it has resolved. The "melting pot" theory falsely implied that there was a consensus culture; a way of life which all Americans can learn, subscribe to, and live by (Abrahams, 1971). The "melting pot" theory has not worked and is a myth. Harold Howe (1980) notes that most Americans conveniently forgot that persons with Black skin, Hispanics, and native Americans were the exceptions to the myth of the "melting

pot". There is simply no hard data to support the contention that the "melting pot" theory worked or is working regardless of how much some Americans desire it to work.

The American culture is a conglomerate of the life styles of all who have participated in the building of America (Abrahams, 1971). Ravitch (1990) notes: "Paradoxical though it may seem, the United States has a common culture that is multicultural." Schools for years have been educating divergent racial and ethnic groups based upon the "melting pot" theory, but more and more educators and others in positions to influence the nature of public education are now prepared to be advocates for the view that the American culture has been fashioned into an interrelated whole by the contributions of many diverse cultural groups (Ponder, 1971). It is not the role of the school to function as the "melting pot" for the purpose of seeking cultural sameness. The American culture belongs to all Americans and is continually evolving. Being a "good" American does not require Blacks, Hispanics, or any other minority group to forfeit their cultural heritage or become facsimiles of White Americans.

Cultural diversity in the public schools is on the increase, and by the turn of the century, one out of every three students in the public schools will be an ethnic minority (Banks & Banks, 1989). The desire of minorities to hold onto their cultural past is stronger today than it was a generation ago, and ethnic minorities have learned how to use the power that has always been the property of the mainstream groups to gain recognition of and

respect for cultural diversity. James Banks (1989) asserts that multicultural education is undergirded by the premise that all students--regardless of their gender and social class, and their ethnic, racial, or cultural characteristics--should have an equal opportunity to learn in school. Banks emphasizes that multicultural education is at least three things an idea or a concept, an educational reform movement, and a process.

Educational equity is the major tenet underlying the development of multicultural education. Multicultural education gives recognition to individual and cultural differences as they are reflected in learning, human relations, motivational incentives, and communication skills. Donna M. Gollnick (1980) provides the following overview of the dimensions of multicultural education:

> The concept of multicultural education evolved from such educational concepts as intergroup education, intercultural education, human relations, ethnic studies, and multi-ethnic studies. A major tenet of multicultural education is cultural pluralism. More often than not, the advocates of multicultural education translate cultural pluralism into the right of individuals to maintain their ethnic identity while sharing a common culture with Americans from many different national origins. .... The objective of multicultural education is to help all students reach their potential. To accomplish this end, educators must understand that

> students' differences are based on more than their intellectual ability. The ability of educators to help students reach their potential is diminished if there is a lack of understanding of cultural factors that affect a student's learning and behavioral patterns in school.

Textbooks and other related instructional materials used in the school often do not reflect the pluralistic nature of our society. Textbooks and other instructional materials constitute highly consequential elements in the total instructional environment. The written word has always been used to convey concepts and values as well as beliefs and attitudes from one person to another and from one generation to another. Our collective view of the present is "in part", a function of our understanding of the past, and our view of history provides the background against which we understand what transpires day to day in our personal lives and in society as a whole (Howard, 1990). History tells people where they have been and what they have been, and most important, an understanding of history tells people where they still must go and what they must be (Clarke, 1972).

Britton & Lumpkin (1983) assert that much of what is officially approved for instructional materials under the mandate of compulsory schooling is unrealistic, undemocratic, and uninspiring and that schools through such instructional materials have severely limited options for people of color and for females of all races. Ron Brandt (1988) agrees that the textbooks used in American schools could and should be better. He notes that

textbook publishers are forced by circumstances to produce books that their customers will buy. The customer, more often than not, is the local school board. Instructional materials for the schools should be developed and purchased because they facilitate teaching and learning and not because they satisfy the prejudices and biases of policymakers. School boards should unite in a collaborative effort to commission respected scholars and educators to develop textbooks and related instructional materials that are free from racial, ethnic, and sexual biases and that correct distortions and counteract the invisibility of minorities in many instructional materials.

Support for the pluralist ideal in American education would require school boards to come to grips with the question of whether or not the ideals of pluralism can find working expression in "institutions deeply grounded in the traditions of White America" (Brown Report, 1986). Pluralism is different from the concept of integration in which minorities are asked, explicitly or implicitly, to abandon their cultural identity in order to merge into the majority community (Brown Report, 1986). True integration is not only racial but cultural, a coming together of different peoples in a social, aesthetic, emotional, and philosophical manner--not a mechanical juxtaposition. Integration is pluralism rather than assimilation; based on respect for differences rather than a desire for amalgamation. Genuine integration is a reciprocal process in which minorities and majorities gravitate toward each other, sharing decision-making control over

institutions and communities and melding their ethnic and aesthetic values.

The pluralist ideal in American education would require schools to implement curricula that embrace an understanding of cultures world-wide and that broaden students' understanding of the arts, humanities, and the social sciences beyond the traditional Western cultures (Presidents' Committee, 1988). The pluralist ideal rejects exclusionary curricula and rejects any "hierarchy of cultural values which places the achievement of Europe as some classical apex and relegates those of other cultures to a lesser status" (Nettleford, 1989).

Support for such specialized programs as Afro-American Studies, Latino Studies, Women's Studies, Jewish Studies, etc. does not represent a conflict with or a compromise of the pluralist ideal. Such specialized areas of study provide minority and majority students alike with opportunities for greater indepth scholarly exploration of aspects of history and culture of a particular group which would be covered, at best, only superficially in courses which provide a general overview of a nation and its people. Ethnic, racial, and religious studies provide a valuable supplement to what is learned about such groups in the general studies program. But appropriate coverage and treatment of minorities in the general curriculum should not be neglected because a school has approved programs in ethnic, racial, and religious studies. Support for not relegating the history and contributions of Black Americans solely to specialized courses or

programs is highlighted in a statement published by the National Alliance of Black School Educators. NABSE (1984) declared: "we ... know that African American history and culture will be unavoidable if truth and quality scholarship form the basis of what is taught and respected in the schools, not as an appendage to subjects but as an integral part."

School boards in examining the heated debates surrounding the issues of "Eurocentric" and "Afrocentric" approaches to history and culture should be guided by the premise that all history not written from scholarship but to accomplish the political motives of a majority or minority group is unacceptable in the nation's schools. The purpose of education is not to reproduce or reinforce the prejudices or biases of any group of Americans. Twisted scholarship and divisive behavior are repugnant and dangerous regardless of the color, creed, or cause of the practitioner. The concern expressed by some historians that a greater treatment of minorities in the curriculum will mean drawing on dubious scholarship should not be predicated on any false premise that there is an absence of a long-standing body of impeccable scholarship upon which to base an Afro-American Studies program. The critics of Afro-American Studies programs who have been quick to proclaim that such programs substitute myths for facts and amount to little more than attempts to use history as a form of therapy should be required to be equally as vocal and open in criticizing mainstream programs which have observed minimally and derisively the contributions of people of color. Much of what has

passed for sound, objective scholarship in history, and the social sciences regarding Black Americans is corrupted by gross and systematic distortions (Howard, 1990).

The pluralist ideal in American education champions a broader interpretation of the American culture and seeks to incorporate due recognition of the ways that the nation's numerous racial, ethnic, and cultural groups have transformed the American culture. The pluralist ideal asks that all groups explore, understand, and try to appreciate one another's cultural experiences and heritage and try to accomplish this without requiring complete agreement on what is just, worthy, and without any requirement that we all be the same (Presidents' Committee, 1988). "The self-confidence of any young person is a delicate web, woven with filaments of courage and family experience, of perceived valuations from others, of social accident, and of a host of other influences" (Brown Report, 1986). In responding to the twin objectives of affirming the self-images and sustaining the motivation of minority students, teachers confront the pedagogical question of how to meet these objectives without doing violence to canons of scholarship and without substituting a pleasing set of lies for an unpleasant set of lies (Howard, 1990).

John R. Howard (1990), a professor of sociology at the State University of New York at Purchase, asserts that Black scholars have always sought to address the distortions of mainstream scholarship, not with pleasant distortions but with good scholarship and that there is no need to resort to myth nor should

there be any fear that good teachers will do so. Professor Howard poses the key question in the "Eurocentric" versus "Afrocentric" debate: "If the term Eurocentric means the teaching of history from a perspective so narrow that it distorts the truth and obscures the complexity of actual history, what does the term Afrocentric imply?" School board members, when it comes to voting time, should place their votes in support of honesty in the teaching of history and behind the development and implementation of curriculum which allows all students to better understand and appreciate the fact that minorities were not mere spectators to history.

Conclusion

Those who serve on school boards vary considerably in their educational backgrounds, in their employment experiences, in their socio-economic status, in their intellectual capacities, and in their personalities. A board member's response to his or her duties and responsibilities is not simply a function of formal expectations, individual needs, and organizational goals. He or she brings to the school board a host of unique attributes, sentiments, values, needs, and motives (Hoy & Miskel, 1987). The beliefs and decisions of members of school boards are affected by their sociological values and understandings of the problems and needs faced by majority and minority group members in their pursuit of life, liberty and happiness. The school board member's educational priorities and strategies are derived from his or her pervasive beliefs and principal educational assumptions.

One of the most demanding requirements of leadership in institutional settings which have a significant impact on the lives of individuals and groups is that major and quite often controversial decisions have to be made. The faithful discharge of the responsibilities inherent in being a school board member necessitates a responsiveness to the issues and conditions associated with providing public education for all students in a manner that expands the scope of their knowledge and their rationale capacities with the scope of educational opportunities bounded only by the respective potential of each student. In a true sense, the effective school board member is an interpreter and translator of social events into educational policy.

The social philosophy of the American democracy has been characterized by efforts to strike a balance between the needs and demands of individuals and groups and those of society. Schools perform a key role in the forming of the American character. Thus, the schools are often called upon to negotiate for the society itself some of the nation's deepest and most severe problems: racism, prejudice, intolerance, and inequity. The schools are frequently the stage where some of America's most basic agonies are on display and where educators are expected to resolve problems which have resisted solution in all other institutional settings (Cunningham, 1971). The reform and renewal of public education in America will not be easy and will most certainly be filled with conflict and controversy. For those school board members who believe that public education is the great equalizer in the

American Democracy, I offer Scott's Ten Commandments for School Board Members to assist you in coming to grips with the great issues that confront public school in America:

1 **Thou shall be demonstrably responsive**

to the premise that inherent or genetic difference in intelligence between races do not exist and that no racial group has a monopoly on intelligence or on any other positive characteristics of the human personality.

2 **Thou shall be guided**

in thy decision making responsibilities by the principle that education should emphasize assistance rather than rejection and success rather than failure, with thy efforts directed to the provision of educational experiences which enhance the creativity and imaginations of all students.

3 **Thou shall not equivocate**

in thy promulgation of the belief that the educability of all students derives more from the nature of the school that they are sent than it derives from the nature of the family from which they come.

4 **Thou shall refute**

and counter the bias that a school system or a school with a mainly minority enrollment is presumptively a poor system or school.

5 **Thou shall honor and keep faith**

with the belief that the integrity and viability of our democratic, pluralistic society, depend, in large measure, on the effectiveness of its schools as instruments of social consciousness and change.

6 Thou shall strive diligently

to produce and preserve schools for students in which educators respect the dignity and importance of those whom they serve and in which educators are as anxious to avoid things that do not work as they are committed to implement things that do.

7 Thou shall have a hostility toward

incompetence and insensitivity with the school system and shall champion the belief that all students are entitled to a public education that is responsive to individual needs.

8 Thou shall exhibit a commitment

to set appropriate goals and expectations for students irrespective of their color, ethnic status, or level of family income and shall work in a responsible manner to achieve those goals and expectations.

9 Thou shall be responsive

to the principle of educational accountability of educators in a manner that is balanced with the need to take risks in trying to discover new knowledge and to develop new products and processes.

10 Thou shall prepare thyself

for high competence and integrity as a board member and shall recognize that a school board can be a part of the problem as well as a part of the solution.

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